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THOREAU AND EMERSON: TWO CONTEMPORARY
VIEWS by Len Gougeon (University of
Scranton)

Although the relationship between Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau is now recognized as a highly significant fellowship between two of America's most important nineteenth-century writers, Emerson's best known early biographers had relatively little to say about it. Oliver Wendell Holmes' RALPH WALDO EMERSON (1884) and James Elliot Cabot's MEMOIR (1887) tend to offer rather brief and distinctly negative views of Thoreau. In the former he is described as "that unique individual, half college-graduate and half Algonquin, the Robinson Crusoe of Walden Pond, who carried out a school-boy whim to its full proportions, and told the story of Nature in undress as only one who had hidden in her bedroom could have told it" (72). Later, Thoreau is described further as a "nullifier of civilization who insisted on nibbling his asparagus on the wrong end" (86). As these statements suggest, Holmes saw Thoreau as a rather crude social malcontent whose solitary and primitive existence at Walden Pond represented a rejection of the benefits of civilization rather than a moral statement on society's shortcomings. Indeed, Holmes goes to some lengths to assure his readers that, unlike his sometime companion, "it would never have occurred to [Emerson] to leave all the conveniences and comforts of life to go and dwell in a shanty, so as to prove to himself that he could live like a savage" (143).

Interestingly, despite the negative view which Holmes portrays in his works, he did have available evidence from at least one first-hand observer that the relationship between Thoreau and Emerson was a close one and that Thoreau was more moralist than savage. The Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr. Papers at the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. contain some of the materials which Holmes used in preparing his biography. Among them is a transcription of a letter from Caroline (Sturgis) Tappan to Holmes dated 3 January 1884. It reads as follows.

He [Emerson] was very fond of Henry Thoreau his "wild Indians" [*sic*] who

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never walked in a path "but made a bee-line through the woods." He would shake his head when I found Thoreau droll, so I had to admit that [he] could talk pretty well. Emerson said of himself that he only valued persons who "could make a statement" and certainly his Thoreau could make nothing else. If he saw a frog he could not let it hop away without a moral comment.

Sturgis, who is described by Joel Myerson as "Margaret Fuller's best friend" (206) was a well-known member of the Transcendental group in Concord in the early 1840s. She published verses in the DIAL, with the encouragement of both Emerson and Fuller, and was a frequent visitor to the Emerson household. Her observations on the Thoreau-Emerson relationship was therefore undoubtedly based on first-hand experience.

James Elliot Cabot's MEMOIR OF RALPH WALDO EMERSON (1887) mentions Thoreau only briefly. He notes, for example, that "Emerson greatly admired the inflexible rectitude of the man, and inferred from it high gifts; he rather enjoyed, as the excess of good quality insufficient in his countrymen and himself, Thoreau's nonchalance, and the stubborn, contradictory attitude into which almost any conversation threw him" (1:282). Additionally, after noting that "Thoreau had a grave, measured way of speaking, and a carriage of the head that reminded one of Emerson and seemed like unconscious imitation," something, he says, that "Emerson always denied," he then goes on to quote, somewhat anomalously, from Emerson's journal the statement, "I told H.T. that his freedom is in the form, but he does not disclose new matter. I am familiar with all his thoughts; they are mine, quite originally dressed" (1:283). Overall, the impression of Cabot's brief comments is that Thoreau was a rather minor and imitative character in Emerson's life. Interestingly, Cabot, like Holmes, had available to him another view of the Thoreau-Emerson relationship from an informed observer which showed that, while Thoreau was indeed influenced by Emerson, he was also a knowledgeable and independent thinker. The information is contained in a letter to Cabot from George William Curtis,

dated 10 June 1885, and is on file in Emerson Papers at the Houghton Library, Harvard. It reads as follows.

I think certainly that both Mr. Alcott and Henry Thoreau were very much influenced by Mr. Emerson, and unconsciously reflected him to himself. Thoreau, however, was a man who had his own qualities. He was an extraordinary observer of natural phenomena, and was [sic] it was Emerson's interest in facts which made Thoreau, who could supply so many at first hand, especially agreeable to him. He liked also the Spartan rigor of Thoreau's life, who was always on duty, and had no relaxations, or small talk, or compromise with conventions.

George Curtis and his brother Burrill were among the earliest Brook Farmers. Both were strongly attracted to Emerson after hearing him lecture on the Oversoul. After leaving Brook Farm they settled for a time in Concord where George soon became a friend of Thoreau (Myerson, 141; Harding, 168-9). Like Sturgis, Curtis' views on the Thoreau-Emerson relationship would be the product of first-hand experience with both. In fact, from time to time he published articles about Thoreau in HARPER'S MAGAZINE where he served on the editorial board. In one of these, appearing in the March 1878 issue, he spoke specifically of Thoreau's originality and independence and noted that "Thoreau was strictly himself and not an imitator, and throughout, although whenever he spoke of public affairs it was in a tone of sympathy with the prevailing sentiment of New England, it was also in a perfectly independent, courageous, and individual manner" (625).

What seems clear in both of these early Emerson biographies is that Holmes and Cabot had formulated their own conservative images of Emerson and apparently selected materials accordingly. Emerson's relationship with the rebellious and unconventional Thoreau obviously did not comport with such views and so the relationship was either glossed over, or misrepresented, or both. Fortunately, later biographers of both Thoreau and Emerson would do much to set the record straight.

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 The Curtis letter is quoted with the permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University and the Ralph Waldo Emerson Memorial Association.

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THE 1990 THOREAU SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING

The 1990 annual meeting was held in Concord, Mass. On Thursday evening at the Lyceum, Richard Fleck spoke on John Muir's Transcendentalism. On Friday afternoon the annual board of directors meeting was held, followed by their annual dinner. Friday evening, Anne R. McGrath spoke at the First Parish on "Henry Thoreau as Correspondent." Saturday morning the business meeting

was held at First Parish. The report of the 1989 annual meeting by Walter Harding was accepted as printed in the Summer, 1989, BULLETIN. The 1990 treasurer's report and the budget for 1991, as prepared by Eric Parkman Smith, treasurer, as printed below, were read and accepted.

	Budget 1991	Actual 1990
<u>Income</u>		
Membership	18,000	17,935
Admissions	4,500	3,720
Net Profit - Shops	22,000	20,910
Investment Income	2,400	2,419
Donations	15,600	12,950
Annual Meeting	2,300	2,257
Other	600	453
Total	65,400	60,644

<u>Expenses</u>		
Wages and Fringes	38,400	37,076
Occupancy	2,500	2,545
Overhead	13,000	12,675
Publications	5,500	5,476
Travel	300	-
Annual Meeting	3,200	3,183
Debt Retirement	-	-
Deficit Reduction	-	-
Archives	500	-
Sub-total	63,400	60,955
Depreciation	2,000	2,092
Total	65,400	63,047

<u>Income or (Deficit)</u>	<u>-0-</u>	<u>(2,403)</u>
Income Before Depreciation	2,000	(311)

Ronald Hoag, chairman of the nominating committee, presented the following slate of officers: president, Edmund Schofield; president-elect for 1991, Edmund Schofield; secretary, Walter Harding; associate secretary, Bradley P. Dean; Secretary-elect for 1991, Bradley P. Dean; all for terms of one year; and Jane Langton and Wesley T. Mott, members of the board of directors for three years. They were all unanimously elected. A memorial tribute to Lewis Leary, who had been president of the Thoreau Society in 1962, was read by Ronald Hoag, and tributes to Milton Paige, who had served as president of the Thoreau Foundation for many years, and for William J. Wolf, the author of THOREAU: MYSTIC PROPHET ECOLOGIST, were read by Anne R. McGrath. The presidential address, by Thomas Blanding, was on "Henry Thoreau, Mystic Transcendentalist," Walter Harding, assisted by Elizabeth Babcock, Ray Gagnon, Jayne Gordon, Anne R. McGrath, and Richard O'Connor, presented "A Thoreau Music Sampler." In the afternoon, Edmund Schofield conducted the annual Thoreau quiz; Jack Borden, president of For Spacious Skies, presented at Fair-Haven Cliff a program "Using Thoreau's Writing to Gain a Deeper Awareness of the Beauty and Wonder of the Sky"; at the First Parish Tom Blanding presented an update on Walden Woods and a new video

cassette on Concord was reviewed; at the Concord Free Public Library, Marcia Moss, our archivist, showed the Thoreau treasures in our archives and in the library; and at the Thoreau Lyceum, there was an auto-graphing party and a picnic supper. In the evening, Tom Potter presented a new multi-media program on "Thoreau, the Great Essayist" and Tom Blanding presented Edmund Schofield, the incoming president, with the society's gavel.

On Sunday morning, Mary Sherwood conducted a nature walk around Walden Pond and The Rev. Gary Smith of First Parish preached a sermon on "Henry D. Thoreau: A Question of Authenticity."

EDMUND A. SCHOFIELD: PRESIDENT AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The Sec'y of the T[horeau] Soc. requests me, as he seems to have most other presidents, by a friendly note from Geneseo the other day, to write "a short introduction to [myself] for the BULLETIN" - telling "a little of [my] life and background and of [my] interest in Thoreau" - a simple & sincere acc't of my own life, I assume, & not merely what I have heard of others' lives; some such acc't as I wd send to my kindred from a distant land, perhaps.

Methinks my lives have not been 1, but legion: I have been a Sailor, Explorer, Student (even, I trust, Scholar), Lichenologist, Ecologist, Horticulturist, Writer, Editor, Proofreader, Teacher, Environmentalist, Antiwar & Civil Rights Marcher - even an Agent of the State [sic!]. I leave in my wake 1 book, many articles of dubious worth, & a few minor original contributions to knowledge. If you will apply the Act of Oblivion against any of these petty & capital offenses, I shall be greatly obliged to you!

1st then, I was born, they say, in Worcester, Mass. - as were T's disciple & literary executor, H.G.O. Blake, & (as I believe) such latter-day Thoreauvians as M. Meltzer, R.W. Robbins, T. Blanding, & R. Lebeaux.

When growing up I often pass'd (unwittingly, of course) the bldg in wh Benj. D. Maxham captured T's "shadow" for Calvin Greene in 6/56. I attended classes @ the Worc. Soc. of Nat. Hist., whose "rooms" T visited in '56, & often attended meetings in Washburn Hall, where T pled for Capt. Jno. Brown on 11/3/59.

2^d, I was fitted for Clark U. @ the S. High School in th- city. I must confess th- I had very little class spirit @ either place, declining out of principle to join a fraternity @ Clark, or to be hazed as a freshman, refusing to let upperclassmen throw me into a pond, turning tradition - if not the u.c. - on its head by throwing them in.

At Clark I majored in biol., thinking (naively) to ensure a life in nature. While @ Clark I made my 1st trip to Antarctica to study plant ecol. It was vast, Titanic, & such as man never inhabits (for long).

3^d, in 7/57 I attended my 1st T Soc. Ann. Mtg, in the co. of 2 older friends from Worc.:-

With fancies unfurled
We left our abodes
And into Concord were whirled
Via Old Marlboro' and Sudbury roads.

I returned to Worc. thoro'ly Concord, just as T, over a century before, had returned to Concord thoro'ly Worcester. The next yr I was duly acknowledged in the TSB for the 1st time as having supplied "information used in this bulletin."

4th, from Clark I went to OH State U. for my doctorate, wh I rec'd in '72. Twice more I traveled to Antarctica, & lce to n. AK. While @ OSU I organized the 1st Earth Day & was more than witness to the antiwar struggle on campus. I can still hear the shots th- wounded students there days before the fatal shootings @ Kent State and can still feel the prick of a bayonet point in my breast. "The Night T Spent in Jail" was premiering @ OSU th- very wk!

5th, from OSU I went to CA for further study, living w/in sight of the Huntington Libr., where many important T mss. repose. Occ. (usu. Sat. A.M.) I was able to spend time there, hoping (in vain) to launch some meaningful T res. proj. After another trip to AK, I returned to OH and worked as an ecologist for the Dept of Natural Resources.

6th, &c., &c.: since the mid-70s I have been, *inter alia*, res. dir. for the Sierra Club in San Francisco, ecologist in IN, & -Ed. in Boston. My interest in T has enriched my life & has been enriched in turn by the curious twists my life has taken. Bec. of (not in spite of) my interest in T I have seen much of the world, have delved deeply into Oriental cultures, & have become interested in the lives of John Muir & later heirs to T's nature philosophy. &c.; &c. At present I am engaged in several projects dealing with T & Walden.

Tho' I cld state to a select few th- aspect of T wh most engages me, & shld be rejoiced @ an opportunity to do so — the drop of a hat, &c., &c. — I feel it wd be to make myself the talk of the Thoreauvian community to descr. or attempt to descr. th- aspect of T's life, ideas, & writings th- specially interests me.

The fact is I am a mystic, a pantheist, & an ecologist to boot. Now I think of it, I shld state simply th- I am a Taoist. That is the shortest way of saying th- one need not understand my explanations in order to understand them ("The Tao th- can be told," &c.); and since this is a Soc. of wh Cook & Blanding have been the pres., I need not hasten to descr. too particularly my studies in that dept of human inquiry.

(P.S. I beg th- the Soc. will not consider me an object of charity, or worse.)

FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION by Edmund Schofield

All Thoreau Society members are urged to set aside the period around Saturday, July 13, 1991, so that they will be able to attend the Society's fiftieth anniversary celebration, which will be held in conjunction with next year's Annual Meeting. Formal and informal discussions about the celebration have been under way for some time now, and a wide array of activities --some to be held in Concord and some elsewhere--have been proposed. Over the next several months members will be informed, through the BULLETIN and various special mailings, of the plans as they develop. It is our hope that each and every member of the Thoreau Society will attend the Annual Meeting in Concord and participate in at least one of the special events. As noted, a number of events will not be held in Concord.

Members with suggestions for additional events or activities should feel free to communicate with the Society's President at (617) 545-4799 or (in writing) at 60 Thoreau Street #320, Concord, MA 01742

WALDEN EARTHCARE CONGRESS by John Malcolm Forbes.

From April 19-22, 1990 a Walden Earthcare Congress was sponsored in Concord by about 20 local, national, and international organizations and attended by about 200 people. Activities included speeches, panel discussions, workshops, colloquia, the giving of a Thoreau-Muir Wilderness Prize to Allen Morgan of Lincoln, an Earthcare Folk Concert, a performance of Charles Ives' "Concord Sonata," the planting of six beech trees near Walden, and the announcement of a Walden Earthcare Declaration. A summary report of the Congress may be obtained from Walden Earthnet, 40 Stow St., Room A-17b, Concord, Mass. 01742 (Tel. 508-369-4252.

SUPPLIED DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS . . .

(Copies of this dissertation may be ordered from University Microfilms in Ann Arbor, Mich.

GROUND FOR LARGE MIXED CHORUS AND ORCHESTRA. [Original Composition]

VIGELAND, Nils Anton, Ph.D.
State University of New York at Buffalo, 1977

Ground uses for its text the work of two authors, Henry Thoreau and James Joyce. Lasting approximately twenty-five minutes, it is divided into two parts. In the first part, after a fanfare based on a W. C. Handy street shuffle the chorus sings a passage from *Finnegan's Wake* of Joyce which is a paraphrase of the Adam and Eve story. From this point on until the end of Part I, the texts are all taken from Thoreau and contain: a homily on the need for man to emulate nature's growth, a diatribe against philanthropy, a lament on the death of John Brown, a hymn to Nature and a whimsical song from *Walden* about the follies of man.

Part II consists of a setting of one long section from the Anna Livia Plurabelle chapter in *Finnegan's Wake*, in which a washerwoman recounts the list of gifts Anna Livia Plurabelle has given to a bizarre list of people. The piece ends with an Irish Tinker melody which relates to Joyce in the manner in which the Handy relates to Thoreau, as a reflection of their ties to folk culture.

The title *Ground*, then refers not only to the musical definition of a constant underlying pattern (more an image here than a reality) but also to a physical substance, to place. For what Thoreau and Joyce share is an obsession for place, a kind of inspired provincialism with the important difference that Thoreau hardly ever left his place (Concord, Massachusetts) while Joyce exiled himself from his own (Dublin). But, in a sense, *Walden* and *Ulysses* share a common urge to describe and remember in the minutest detail every aspect of a chosen place — one empty of people, one full of them. The music, while it contains some reoccurring material, continually expands while reexamining itself, as though one were walking through a city or a meadow always by a different route. The piece is scored for chorus, 2 flutes (2nd pic.), 2 oboes (2nd English Horn), 3 B^b clarinets (2nd E^b clarinet-3rd Sop. Sax. and Bass

Clarinet), 2 bassoon, 1 horn, 3 trumpets (1st D Trumpet), trombones, tuba, strings, percussion, harp, and piano.

Order No. 77-19,487, 81 pp.

THE ADVENT OF 'HENRY': A NOTE ON THOREAU'S 'NEW' HEADSTONE by Edmund A. Schofield.

Thomas Blanding chronicles both the translation, circa 1866, of Thoreau's remains from their original repose in Concord's New Burying Ground to Author's Ridge in nearby Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, and the reincarnation of his gravestone, "about 1890," from a three-foot-tall, red-brown marker made of sandstone to a lighter-colored stone, "smaller than a bread box" and inscribed simply "Henry"—one of six identical stones erected for Thoreau and the five other members of his immediate family (his parents, his two sisters, and his brother). (1) In addition to the small headstones, a large Maine granite monument was erected in the Thoreau family plot. Sophia Thoreau was responsible for the move of the 1860s, while Benjamin B. Thatcher of Bangor, Maine, Henry's second cousin, arranged for the new stones some twenty-five years later. As noted above, the exact dates of the transfer and the placing of the new markers have not been determined, but the diary of a Sudbury, Massachusetts, geologist sheds some

light on the latter question.

George Hunt Barton (1852-1933), a native and resident of the neighboring town of Sudbury and a member of the M.I.T. faculty, conducted geological investigations in the Concord area during the 1880s and 1890s. Two entries in his manuscript diary describe visits to the Thoreau family grave.

The first entry, that for May 17, 1888, reads in part as follows: ". . . At Concord we visited . . . Sleepy Hollow cemetery where we stood by the graves of Emerson, Hawthorne, Alcott, Thoreau and others. . . ." (2) The second entry, that for June 8, 1890, reads in part as follows: "... Mr. Barto [*sic*] and I . . . drove to Concord Centre via Wetherbee's and there visited all the places of note. In the Thoreau lot at Sleepy Hollow Cemetery I saw that the old sandstone slabs had been replaced by one massive granite slab. It does not seem quite in keeping with Thoreau's character however. . . ." (3)

Apparently, the massive family stone was set in place first (before Barton's second visit), then (after Barton's visit) the six modest individual markers; otherwise, Barton--one may assume--surely would have mentioned them. Thus, one may conjecture that the process was yet under way when Barton made his second visit to the Thoreau plot: the large granite monument was in place by June 8, 1890, the six small markers not until some time thereafter.

NOTES

- 1 THE CONCORD SAUNTERER, 15 (Spring, 1980), 18; 17 (March, 1984), 49-50.
- 2 Diary of George Hunt Barton. Vol. for January 1888-April 1890, p. 47 (Barton-Bradshaw Room, Goodnow Library, South Sudbury, Mass.).
- 3 *Ibid.* Vol. for May 1890-June 1892, p. 45.

NOTES AND QUERIES . . .

John Cage, the composer, and THE THOREAU QUARTERLY are sponsoring a contest for the creation of computer music in the spirit of the "Sounds" chapter in WALDEN. For details, write Austin Meredith, 2860 Kenwood Isles Drive, Minneapolis, MN 55408.

When English teachers at the Concord-Carlisle, Mass. High School discovered that the text of "Civil Disobedience" in their THE U.S. IN LITERATURE classroom text was heavily abridged with some of the strongest and most famous passages omitted, they wrote a strong letter of protest to its publisher the Scott, Foresman Co.

The publicity stirred up by the controversy over protecting Walden Woods has been overwhelming of late. The following is a list of newspaper articles that have been called to our attention, but it is far, far from complete: BEACON JOURNAL, April 26; BOSTON GLOBE, March 25, 31, April 3, 5, 10, 18, 20, 25, 26, 27, 29, May 15; BOSTON HERALD Mar. 31, Ap. 16, 20, 26, 27, 28,

May 15; BOSTON PHOENIX, March 30; BOULDER (Col.) CAMERA, Ap. 20; BUFFALO (N.Y.) NEWS May 13; LINCOLN (Mass.) JOURNAL Ap. 26; ROCHESTER (N.Y.) DEMOCRAT CHRONICLE May 14; TOLEDO (Ohio) BLADE May 7; TV GUIDE Feb 17; WALL ST. JOURNAL Ap. 24; WORCESTER TELEGRAM, Ap. 19.

We are told that wedding announcements have been seen which attribute to Thoreau:

As I love nature,
As I love singing birds
And flowing rivers and
Gleaming stubble and
Morning and evening
And summer and winter,
So I love thee...yet even more.

Can anyone identify where in Thoreau's writings it can be found.

A new series of salad dressings available in many supermarkets is named "Walden Farms Salad Dressings." Its manufacturer, Paul Berko, writes, "In selecting a name for our new dressings, we wanted to convey the concept of naturalness and purity. What better name than Walden Farms?"

THOREAU IN ROUMANIA by Dr. Cătălin Mamali

[Editor's note: We have been honored in recent months by a correspondence with Dr. Mamali of Bucharest and he has given us gracious permission to reprint several paragraphs from those letters on Thoreau in Roumania in the recent months of turbulence. Dr. Mamali has written several articles on Thoreau and plans are under way for the publication soon of a Roumanian translation of Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience."]

Thoreau is badly needed in Romania for a long time but NOW his conception and experiences are extremely important in order to achieve a healthy relationship between the individual and the state.

I am afraid, without being a pessimistic person, that the totalitarian habits, structures, and actors are re-emerging in Romania. It is not only a question regarding the inertia of the old structures but also a question of reactivating the old procedures, the manipulative mega-machine and of using other means which are more sophisticated. Also a kind of a "second communist army" (like the reserve troops) is already disclosed.

I do consider that the Thoreauvian experience is very meaningful for many people who are searching a non-violent and efficient way to express their inner voices in order to achieve a self-reform and an open society in Romania. I am trying to express publicly its meaning here.

The non-violent resistance is going on in the university place. More than 14 persons (from 80 at the beginning) are in hunger strike. Some of them for more than 30 days.